



Terence Taylor

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International Institute for Strategic Studies



"International Law and Imminent Threats"

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**Mershon Center
Room 120**



International law in the field of armed conflict has always evolved in response to scientific and technological advances applied to weapons as well as to changes in the nature of conflict resulting from political and societal developments. Examples of such watershed moments include the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical weapons in the wake of the experience of their use in the First World War; further developments in the law relating to the protection, among other things, of civilian populations in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 as a result of the devastation of cities resulting from the use of air delivered weapons; and partly as a result of the nature of the guerrilla wars in Africa and Central America of the 1960s and 1970s rules relating to the definition of combatants and military targets were further developed in the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. All these examples relate to the laws with regard to the conduct of war (*jus in bello*). Understandably, due to the potential for abuse, the rules relating to legality of engaging in an armed conflict in the first instance (*jus ad bellum*) have evolved more cautiously. However, the scientific and technical developments particularly (but not exclusively) in relation to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their means of delivery, impel governments to consider possible military actions in the event that a devastating attack on them is perceived to be imminent. Given the apparent differences between governments and among their citizens some common understanding of what constitutes an imminent threat is necessary to maintain the rule of law and to provide for the protection of the civilian populations against the possibility of a devastating surprise attack. It is an urgent matter to re-examine traditional notions of anticipatory self-defense in the light of the developments outlined above and in the context of actions carried out by the United States and other countries in Iraq and the campaign against international terrorism.

Terence Taylor studies international security policy, risk analysis, scientific and technological developments and their impact on political and economic stability worldwide. He was with the International Institute for Strategic Studies for ten years where he was one of the Institute's leading experts on issues associated with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their means of delivery. He had a particular responsibility for IISS on all issues affecting public safety and security in relation to biological risks and advances in the life sciences.

He currently heads a project on this issue called the International Council of the Life Sciences. He was one of the Commissioners to the UN Special Commission on Iraq for which he also conducted missions as a Chief Inspector. He was a Research Fellow on the Science Program at the Center for International Security and Co-operation at Stanford University where he carried out, among other subjects, studies of the implications for government and industry of the weapons of mass destruction treaties and agreements.

He has also carried out consultancy work for the International Committee of the Red Cross on the implementation and development of the laws of armed conflict and consultancy for private companies on political risk analysis (both regional and country-specific). He served as a career officer in the British Army on operations in many parts of the world, including counter-terrorist operations and UN peacekeeping.

His publications include monographs, book chapters and articles for, among others, Stanford University, the World Economic

Forum, SIPRI, the Crimes of War Project, *International Herald Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal*, the *International Defence Review*, the *Independent* (London), *Tiempo* (Madrid), the *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, *The Washington Quarterly* and other scholarly journals including unsigned contributions to IISS publications.